

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY MANILA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, RP

SUBJECT: OPPOSITION NON-PARTICIPATION IN APRIL
ELECTION

REF: MANILA 859

1. STEVE PSINAKIS CALLED ON COUNTRY DIRECTOR FLECK
JANUARY 17 AND RAISED SUBJECT OF ELECTION ANNOUNCED BY
MARCOS FOR APRIL 2. PSINAKIS SAID HE WOULD MEET LATER IN
DAY WITH RAUL MANG LAPUS AND OTHER OPPOSITION LEADERS TO
DISCUSS POSITION THEY WOULD TAKE REGARDING PARTICIPATION IN
ELECTION. MEETING HAD BEEN PLANNED PRIOR TO MARCOS AN-
NOUNCEMENT JANUARY 17 AND OPPOSITION LEADERS HAD INTENDED
TO PROPOSE CERTAIN CONDITIONS TO MARCOS FOR THEIR PARTICI-
PATION. CONDITIONS WOULD HAVE INCLUDED: (1) PERMISSION TO
REVIVE THE PHILIPPINE TIMES AS AN UNIMPEDED VEHICLE FOR
DISSEMINATION OF OPPOSITION VIEWS AND CAMPAING STATEMENTS:
AND (2) A CAMPAIGN PERIOD OF AT LEAST SIX MONTHS WHICH
WOULD ENABLE THE OPPOSITION TO LAY ITS VIEWS BEFORE THE
PEOPLE. THE OPPOSITION LEADERS IN THE PHILIPPINES AND IN
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THE UNITED STATES WERE DIVIDED IN THEIR ASSESSMENT OF THE
ELECTION, SOME BELIEVING THAT IT WOULD BE A VALUABLE STEP
IN THE DIRECTION OF A RESTORATION OF DEMOCRACY WHILE OTHERS
VIEWED IT AS A FARCE FROM START OF FINISH. RAUL MANG LAPUS
HAD RECEIVED FROM THE PHILIPPINES A SUGGESTION THAT HE
RETURN AND RUN AS A CANDIDATE.

2. PSINAKIS SAID THAT HE HAD BEEN ONE OF THE OPTIMISTS, BELIEVING THAT THE ELECTION WAS A PROMISING DEVELOPMENT. HOWEVER, THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT THE CAMPAIGN PERIOD WOULD BE OF ONLY TWO MONTHS DURATION HAD CONVINCED HIM THAT IT WAS REALLY A FARCE AND THAT FOR THE OPPOSITION TO SUPPORT THE ELECTION OR PARTICIPATE IN IT IN ANY WAY WOULD DO MORE HARM THAN GOOD FOR THE CAUSE OF DEMOCRACY IN THE PHILIPPINES. HE SAID THE SHORT TIME PERIOD REMAINING BEFORE THE START OF THE CAMPAIGN WOULD EFFECTIVELY PREVENT THE OPPOSITION LEADERS IN THE US FROM COORDINATING THEIR POSITION WITH THEIR COLLEAGUES IN THE PHILIPPINES AND THE BRIEF DURATION OF THE CAMPAIGN ITSELF WOULD KEEP ANY OPPOSITION CANDIDATES FROM EDUCATING THE ELECTORATE.

3. LATER THAT DAY, PSINAKIS TELEPHONED FLECK AT HOME TO SAY THAT HE HAD NEGLECTED TO MENTION ONE IMPORTANT FACTOR. MANGLAPUS HAD READ A RECENT STATEMENT BY MARCOS TO THE EFFECT THAT POLITICAL PARTIES NEED NOT BE REVIVED FOR THIS ELECTION. PSINAKIS SAID THAT SOME OF THE OPPOSITION LEADERS WERE OF THE OPINION THAT EVEN THOUGH THEY WERE SO FEW THAT THEY COULD NOT POSSIBLY WIN A MAJORITY OF SEATS IN THE INTERIM LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY UNDER THE MOST FAVORABLE CONDITIONS, STILL IF TEN OR 15 OF THEM, RUNNING AS A PARTY, WERE ELECTED, THAT WOULD BE A START TOWARD THE REVITALIZATION OF THE PARTY SYSTEM.

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4. STILL LATER, FLECK RECEIVED A TELEPHONE CALL FROM RAUL MANGLAPUS, WHO SAID THAT HE HAD JUST BEEN IN TOUCH WITH FRIENDS IN THE PHILIPPINES WHO HAD CONFIRMED THAT THE REVIVAL OF POLITICAL PARTIES WOULD NOT BE PERMITTED IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE FORTHCOMING ELECTION. MANGLAPUS SAID THAT THE OPPOSITION LEADERS HAD DECIDED NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE ELECTION, WITH THE EXCEPTION OF JIMMY FERRER, FORMER ELECTION COMMISSIONER. HE SAID MARCOS WAS NOW IN THE PROCESS OF FORMING HIS OWN PSEUDO OPPOSITION, UNDER THE LABEL OF "THE EASTERN VISAYAS YOUNG TURKS". CHRISTOPHER

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